

THE
Thunder-Storm.

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BY MRS. SHERWOOD,

Author of "Little Henry and his Bearer," &c. &c.

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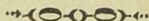
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“LITTLE HENRY & HIS BEARER,”
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SEVENTH EDITION.

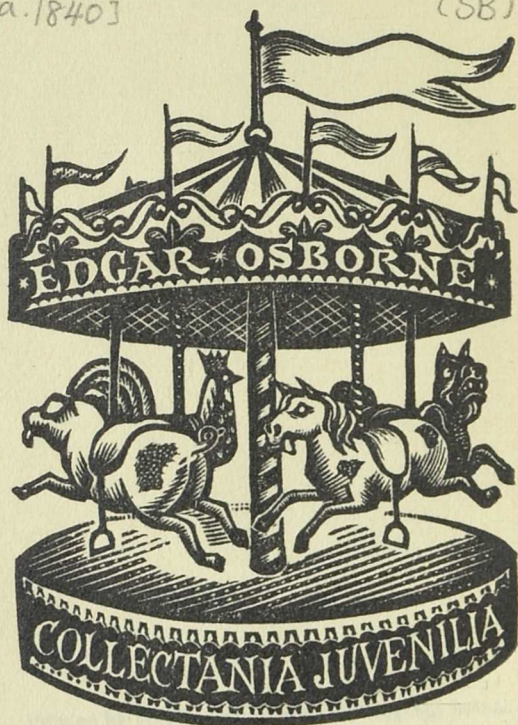
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THE
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MY little readers, I am now going to tell you what you will not understand very well, unless you buy the companions of this little book; one of which is called *The Rosebuds*, and the other *The Idiot Boy*.

The first of these will tell you that we are three sisters, living with a grandmother in a very pretty cottage; and the second will give you an account of a walk which we took, one fine summer evening, with the maid Betty, through a wood, where we saw a poor idiot boy. You will also learn that I was very unkind to this poor boy, but that Mary and Sarah gave him some of their cake. I was very sorry after for my unkindness to this poor boy.

Now, towards the end of the same summer, our grandmamma said to us, that she had a little present to send to her old friend who lived on the other side the wood; “but,”

added she, "I don't know how to send it, for Betty cannot go to-day."

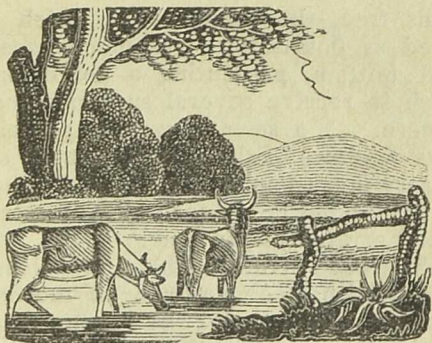
"But cannot we go without Betty?" we said. "We know the way very well, and we will be very steady, and we will come home before the sun sets."

"Well," said our grandmamma, "I think I will try you this once; but if you get into any scrapes, I shall be afraid of trusting you again."

We were ready as soon as dinner was over; and we agreed to carry the basket by turns, taking some pears in our pockets to give to the idiot boy, if by chance we should meet him in the wood.

It was the latter end of August, and very very hot: the cows were cooling their feet in a brook in one field, and the flocks were gathered together under the trees as we crossed another.

"We shall be cooler here," said Mary, as we passed under the trees. But we were not cooler, for there was not a breath of air among the branches, and scarce a leaf moved through all the wood; the very aspen leaves were still: yet there was a great noise of buzzing and humming in the woods, and wherever there was a gleam of sunshine breaking through the trees, it seemed filled with insects. But, as we descended into the dingle, there was a breeze of cool air,



which came down in the direction of the brook; and we stood some time on the bridge, looking up the dell to where the water falling from the higher grounds formed a beautiful cascade. It is pleasant even to look at water when we are hot; and I have heard it said, that no one knows so much the value of flowing springs and fountains of water as those who have travelled through burning climates; nor can any but such thoroughly understand the words of King David: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* (Psalm xlii. 1.)

We now approached a great oak tree, the father of the forest, as we called this ancient tree. We lingered awhile in the deep shade, and discovered that the trunk

of this tree, the branches of which still seemed so flourishing, was much decayed at the bottom, presenting a hollow large enough to receive several such persons as we were. We soon, however, perceived by the shadows of the woods that we must not tarry much longer if we hoped to be in time for the old lady's tea; so we hastened on, and arrived just in time.

I shall not say much about the pleasure she shewed at seeing us, nor of the quantity of bread-and-butter she cut for us. As soon, however, as she thought we had had enough, she made us put on our bonnets, and bade us hasten home, according to the old saying, that it is always most kind to speed the parting guest.

The sun was descending fast when we left the house where we had been so kindly entertained; but we reckoned that we should be at home, with ease, before the twilight should be far advanced. It was still very hot; so much so that we could not help saying to each other, "What is there this evening which makes us feel so tired?"

We now observed the clouds which were gathered in the west becoming very dark, with white and very bright edges, and they seemed heaped one on another like rocks, with towers and pinnacles resembling castles of dark stone: there were marks of



black directly across the body of the sun, and the sun itself looked red and angry.

“Do you see the sky, Mary?” said Sally.
“How dark it appears!”

The longer we looked at the clouds we were the more frightened, for we saw flashes of lightning breaking from them, and soon afterwards heard distant claps of thunder.

We were still in the open field, and the best thing we could have done would have been to have run back to the house of our kind old friend. But children seldom do the right thing at the right time, particularly when they are frightened; so we ran on to the entrance of the wood, where seeing the angry clouds no longer, or the flashes of lightning, we proceeded more quietly. But while we lingered, the wood became

suddenly dark; and though not a branch or leaf moved, there was a groaning and creaking among the trees, as if they were capable of knowing fear. We looked at each other, and each took a hand of little Sally, who turned quite pale.

“Don’t be frightened, dear Sally,” said Mary; “God is present every where: he will take care of us, don’t fear.”

We were now come into a path as dark as it often is in summer at midnight, and we found it difficult to walk because of the roots of the trees, which, running across the path, sometimes caught our feet; and through an opening we saw the sky, red and fiery, like burning coals. I never had seen such a sight.

At length came a vivid flash of lightning, shewing the shape of every tree, and then followed such a clap of thunder as I had never heard before. The thunder rolled away, but another noise followed; it resembled the sudden roar of water, and it proved to be the bursting of a little dam or bank of earth. This dam was broken by the fall of a tree, blasted with the lightning, whose roots being in the embankment, burst it open, and let out the water.

Terror now seemed to give us wings; and we ran along the wood-walk, and down the dingle, towards the bridge: but we had

not reached the bottom of the dingle, when we perceived a new trouble—the waters of the brook were swelled to such a height, and had come down with such force, that they had washed away the bridge.

Consider, my dear little readers, what a dreadful state we were in, when we found the bridge gone, and we a mile or more from home, while the thunder roared above our heads, and the lightning flashed around us.

We looked about us in terror, and at length resolved to get into the hollow of the great oak tree which was close at hand: there we thought we should be safe. I led the way, and Mary and Sarah followed, shutting our eyes, and trying to stop our ears against the noise of the thunder.

We did not know that there was any one near us, but suddenly I saw a dark shadow before the entrance of the hollow trunk. I screamed aloud, and my sisters saw the same creature. Sarah and I could not speak: we thought of wolves, and all sorts of terrible things; for we saw a shaggy rough head, becoming distinct as the lightnings flashed, and again being lost in the darkness.

Mary being the least alarmed, cried out, “Who is there? what is it?”

There was no answer made, such as we



could understand; but a sort of strange noise, like that of a person speaking a foreign tongue, and stammering at the same time.

“Who are you?” said Mary.

The noise was repeated: the person spoke very quick, and as if in some trouble; and then a hand was put into the hollow place, and little Sarah, who happened to be nearest the opening, was seized and dragged out.

We did not lose a moment to hasten out after her: and then we saw in the flashes of the lightning that the person who had hold of her was the idiot boy, who, not heeding her screams and struggles, was dragging her up the stony path which we had climbed with such difficulty a few hours before.

“Stop! stop!” cried Mary, “stop! stop!” while I and Sally made the hollow valley echo with our cries. But the poor boy dragged our little sister up the pathway, with a strength she could not resist, and we followed, almost at our wits’ end with terror.

At length the idiot loosed his hold of our frightened little sister.

The thunder roared, the wind rocked the trees, and the flashes of lightning were more frequent than the ticking of a clock; the dark woods being at one instant bright as day, and the next as black as night. The idiot stood panting for breath, Sarah sobbed and clung to us, and Mary and I were like persons stupid with wonder.

Such a flash of lightning now blazed in our eyes as made us all shrink down on our knees and cover our faces with our hands. The thunder that followed was like the sound of a cannon. A heavy fall, like that of some mighty building on the ground, then followed; and the next flash of lightning shewed the giant oak, the father of the forest, lying blasted on the ground. The storm had then spent itself, and, in a few minutes, the clouds rolled away, a gentle shower descended upon us, cooling the air, and refreshing the green herbs; and a lovely rainbow presented itself.

The passing away of the storm was so



rapid, and so thankful we were that our lives had been thus wonderfully saved, that for one minute, in our gratitude to God, we forgot the idiot boy; and when we turned to thank him for our lives preserved—for he had indeed saved us, having just so much knowledge as to understand that any open place, where there were no tall trees or buildings, was safer in a thunder-storm than such a place as we had chosen—we saw him climbing up the side of the nearest bank, being already half hid by the bushes. We called to him, but he did not answer; and it appears he had forgotten all about the thunder-storm, and what he had done for us; for nothing that was said seemed to bring it to his mind again. But we never forgot what he had done for us; and

my grandmother took care that neither he nor his granny should ever afterwards know any want: and when he died, which was about three years afterwards, we walked in white at his funeral, and did all that in us lay to comfort his grandmother for the loss of her poor idiot boy. And surely she might be comforted, for she had done her best to keep him from the knowledge of wickedness, and to make him acquainted with his Redeemer while he lived; and she had every reasonable assurance that he would be a partaker in death with those little ones of whom our blessed Lord said, "*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.*" (Mark x. 14.)



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FINIS.
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